

Radical

Lesson 3: Beginning at the End of Ourselves

DAY 1

Read Chapter 3

Memory Verse: I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15.5 (ESV)

Context: Underlying the American dream is a dangerous assumption; if we are not cautious we will unknowingly accept. The American dream also contains a deadly goal; if we are not careful we will ultimately achieve. The dangerous assumption we unknowingly accept is believing our greatest asset is our own ability. The American dream prizes what people can accomplish when they believe and trust in themselves, and we are drawn toward such thinking. But the gospel has different priorities. The gospel beckons us to die to ourselves, believe in God, and trust in His power. Even more important is the subtle fatal goal we will achieve when we pursue the American dream. As long as we achieve our desires in our own power, we will always attribute it to our own glory. But here the gospel and the American dream are clearly and ultimately antithetical to one another. While the goal of the American dream is to make much of us, the goal of the gospel is to make much of God.

DAY 2

BIBLE STUDY

Focal Passage: John 15.1-11

Supporting Passages: Exodus 33:1–18; Matthew 11:28–30; Luke 11:1–13; Luke 24:45–49; John 15:12–17; Colossians 1:24–2:5

Biblical Truth: There is no way to live in relationship with God apart from total dependence on His presence.

1. In verse 1, identify the three characters of the text and their identities
2. The Scofield Reference Bible points out that these verses identify three conditions of a fruitful life. Study these verses to discover these three conditions. (The first one is done for you as a model.)
 - Cleansing (v. 2-3)
 - A _____ (v. 4-7)
 - O _____ (v. 10, 14)
3. John 15.1-2 says that God is the vinedresser and that He continues to prune the branches to insure that they produce sufficient fruit. The KJV uses the word “*purgeth*” in verse 2. Almost all other translations use “*prunes*.” The word used here is the root of our English word “cathartic,” so the truest meaning of the word is “to cleanse.” In

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fact, the word “clean” in verse 3 is a form of the word “purgeth” in verse 2. Based on verse 1-3...

- Why does God prune or cleanse us?
 - How does God prune or cleanse us?
4. How have you encountered God’s pruning? In what ways has God worked through Scripture to change your life, your way of thinking, or your behavior?
 5. Purging may refer to cleansing from impurities, from corrupt desires, from sin and guilt, or from anything that will leave a stain. It may also refer to pruning away useless shoots. In our lives, this means extraneous or unnecessary “stuff.” What are some areas of your life that are “useless shoots” that stand in the way of your spiritual growth?
 6. The branches mentioned in verse 1 represent individual Christians who make up the vine – the body of Christ. Based on your understanding of these verses, mark the correct answer to this question.
 - A branch cannot, by its own efforts, produce either life or fruit.

True False
 7. Study verses 4-6 carefully. How is fruit produced in the believer? How much effort is required on our part to increase the Christ-life in us?

DAY 3

BIBLE STUDY CONTINUED

1. As we read these verses and other similar references, we tend to think of “fruit” as how many people are saved or brought into the church by our actions. While this is true in part, read the following verses from the book of Acts: Acts 2.41; 2.47; 5.14; 11.24; 13.48. Now list all of the verbs from each verse that concern the numerical growth of the Church. (Read about this in the text, p. 52-53.)
 - What do you find in common?
 - Based on these verses, who controlled the growth of the Church?
 - What truth can you discern from this concerning “fruit” as it relates to people joining the church?

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2. Read Matthew 7.15-27 and see if there might be other ways to define the “fruit” that Jesus is looking for. Think of it like this: What purpose does the vinedresser (the Father) have for the vine (Christ and His body, the church)? Is it to produce branches or fruit?
3. Based on our memory verse for today, what abilities does the branch have that can produce spiritual fruit?
4. The word “abide” means to remain or to continue. (Count how many times these words are used in these few verses.) How do we abide in Him and He in us? (Read again verses 3, 7, and 10.)
5. Read verse 7. What is the direct relationship between “abiding” and praying? (Compare v. 16 also.)
6. What is one of our greatest rewards for being cleaned (pruned), for abiding, and for our obedience? (Read v. 11.)
7. When we come to understand that it is our responsibility to abide or remain and that it is God’s responsibility to produce fruit in and through us, who is most likely to get the glory?

DAY 4

1. Read again the section entitled “Subtle Dangers” (p. 45-47).
 - What is “the American Dream?”
 - How does the American dream differ from the call of Christ?
2. What are the two basic underlying principles upon which the American dream is based? (p. 46-47) How might each of these affect our response to the call of Christ?

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3. On the left below is a principle of the American dream. On the right, provide what Christ has to say concerning these principles.
- Believe in yourself _____ (Mark 8.34-35)
 - Trust in your own abilities _____ (Proverbs 3.5)
4. On p. 47, David Platt (DP) makes what appears to be a strange statement: "God actually delights in exalting our inability." What is meant by this statement? Can you think of other examples other than Joshua and Israel at Jericho?

DAY 5

1. Beginning on p. 49, what does DP identify as the modern church's requirements for building a growing, dynamic, successful church? (The first one is done for you. Don't worry about the alliteration. It's just a tool to help – a clue – not a requirement.)
- Performance
 - P _____
 - P _____
 - P _____
 - P _____
2. On p. 50, DP says that what is lacking in this picture is a desperation for the p_____ of God.
3. On p. 51, DP points out that, in his study of the first century church as recorded in Acts, he does not see the church plotting strategy, but p_____ for the power of God as well as His p_____.
4. Re-read the section entitled "Superior Power." Based on what is said in this section, how important or what is the intrinsic value of our resources? What gives value to our resources?
5. What is your answer to the two questions DP asks on the last page of the chapter?
- Would you say that your life is marked by desperation for the Spirit of God?
 - Would you say that our church is characterized by this sense of desperation?